

130 Old North Road
Barkhamsted, CT 06063
March 12, 2014

Dear Chairman Fleischmann, Co-chair Stillman and Fellow Members of the Education Committee,

I served as an elementary educator for 41 years in the town of Barkhamsted, Connecticut. It is located in the Northwest Corner and is in one of the two counties NOT represented in the newly formed Governor's Common Core Task Force. Since I retired in June, I am available to serve as a teacher representative for Litchfield County.

I have been reflecting on what has transpired regarding Common Core, and I continue to do so, but now I would like to focus on some recommendations.

#1-The State Department of Education needs to scrutinize the curriculum development process conducted in ALL districts-not just some. I believe Legislators are hearing a message that all districts are implementing a system of curriculum development/revision. Small districts are taking baby steps with or without collaboration with neighboring districts or Regional Education Service Centers.

Rep. Ackert asked at the forum last week how curriculum is developed in our State. The answer to this is where problems arise. Large towns and cities with necessary funds AND a hierarchy of staff to implement and monitor curriculum issues such as Wallingford will do well. K-12 regionalized school districts and schools that collaborate will do well. Schools that request full support from RESC's and small districts with curriculum support staff and solid professional development opportunities will do well. Small towns with minimal support will progress more slowly, and large cities with economic challenges have many other factors that will continue to interfere with successfully tackling rigorous standards.

#2-Utilize the COMMON CORE STANDARDS to establish basic STATE curricula for both ELA (English Language Arts) and Math, which individual districts can then utilize as a springboard for enriching, revamping, adapting, or implementing in their own district.

#3-Reduce the amount of SBAC testing to grades 4, 6, 8 and 10 in order to give more time to teaching and learning. Individual schools and districts already have tests to monitor progress.

#4-Require all STATE undergraduate teacher preparation programs to study the COMMON CORE STANDARDS and the STATE curricula (after it is developed), so that beginning teachers will be familiar with student expectations when they embark on their new career.

#5-Activate the ELA and Math consultants at the State level. Increase staffing that could assist in the development of a rigorous STATE curriculum. Then send those individuals out to districts to assist in curriculum development. The area RESC's need to be able to offer more assistance as well.

Unless the Connecticut State Dept. of Education addresses the curriculum development issues, I strongly recommend that you vote in favor of Bill H.B. No. 5078. Please slow down and listen to those who work directly with children.

Sincerely,

Catherine T. Connole